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Farmers' Reactions to Possible Changes  
in the AAA Program with the Purpose of  
Encouraging Live-at-Home.

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April 8, 1941.

Division of Program Surveys.

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## Results

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### Summary of Results

1. A substantial majority of cotton farmers favor the general objective of raising more of their living at home. There is considerable evidence that "live-at-home" is a goal which is almost as popular among these farmers as "soil conservation," although of course certain areas and certain groups of farmers are more concerned with it than others. (See p. 3 for details)
2. Although a majority of farmers favor the objective of increased "live-at-home" they see certain difficulties in attaining it. Their comments indicate a rather widespread if somewhat vague feeling that the traditional approach of relying largely upon education and exhortation will not get results. Instead, what seems called for is a forthright and skillful attack upon certain fundamental obstacles. Farmers mentioned the following difficulties most frequently:
  - a. A program with more emphasis on live-at-home would arouse opposition from landlords (See pp. 4-5)
  - b. It would further reduce cash incomes which are already too low. (See p. 5)
  - c. It would require more capital than is available to small farmers and tenants. (See p. 5)

### Sample

These tabulations are based on 353 interviews with cotton farmers. The interviewing was done between November 25, 1940 and February 21, 1941. The following seven states were visited:

Texas	Mississippi
Oklahoma	Alabama
Arkansas	Georgia
South Carolina	





### Introductory Note

This is the second of a series of reports dealing with farmers' reactions to the AAA program and to the possibility of changing it to fit present conditions.

For many years and particularly since the collapse of the cotton export market there has been discussion of the need for encouraging cotton farmers to raise more of their food and feed at home. The present Triple-A program has made substantial progress in this direction but there is general agreement that more needs to be done. This report presents some reactions of cotton farmers to this live-at-home problem.

In order to provide some focus for these reactions it was necessary to agree on some suggested program changes with the objective of stimulating more live-at-home which could be described to farmers. Making such changes is of course an extremely difficult and complicated problem. Also a program with more emphasis on live-at-home would necessarily vary in the different sub-regions of the cotton belt. Consequently, the four points which were finally selected for the purposes of this study in no sense represent a proposed "best way" to more live-at-home but were developed as a stimulus to get at the farmers' state of mind on this problem. These four points which will be referred to briefly as the "suggested live-at-home program" were as follows:

1. Farmers would be required to carry out a farm plan providing for home production of food and feed.
2. In this plan provision would be made for the diversion of some cotton acreage--perhaps one to ten acres. Thus, acreage planted to cotton would be less than present allotments.
3. If both of these requirements were met, total benefit payments would remain at about the same level as at present. If the farmer failed to follow a live-at-home program no payments would be made.
4. The food and feed produced on the diverted acreage could not be marketed commercially.





I. Attitudes of cotton farmers toward the "suggested" live-at-home program.

One-fourth of the farmers interviewed were strongly favorable to such a program. One-third liked the idea of more living at home but had reservations about working out a program which would accomplish it successfully. Somewhat over one-fourth were unfavorable to the "suggested" live-at-home program.

Strongly favorable	25%
Likes idea of more live-at-home; has qualifications about the "suggested" program	34
Unfavorable	29
Undecided	12
	<u>100%</u>

No. of farmers giving answers 322

II. Farmers' preferences as between the present AAA cotton program and an amended program emphasizing live-at-home.

When farmers were asked to make a choice between these two programs, neither one proved substantially more popular than the other. Over one-third gave no clear indication as to which program they preferred.

Prefer live-at-home to present program	31%
Prefer present program to live-at-home	30
Don't know or no clear preference given	39
	<u>100%</u>

No. of farmers giving answers 257

III. Favorable comments by farmers on changes to encourage live-at-home.

A. Most frequent favorable comment

1. Much the most frequent favorable comment made by farmers was that live-at-home changes would make farmers better off--would improve their level of living.
2. A sizable number of those mentioning this point focussed it specifically on the improvement in living levels that would be received by tenants and share croppers.



B. Other favorable comments

Less frequent comments were as follows:

1. Putting an inducement like payments on living at home is the only way to get farmers to do it.
2. These changes would encourage a farther retention of cotton acreage and more soil conservation.
3. These changes would enable landlords to cut down on the expense of "furnishing" tenants.

IV. Comments indicating criticisms of or reservations about live-at-home changes in the AAA program.

A. Reservations by tenants because of expected opposition by landlords.

While they were generally in favor of the idea of more living at home, many tenants and sharecroppers seemed to feel that these changes might not be successful because of opposition by landlords. They mentioned the following as reasons for opposition by landlords:

1. The landlord would oppose it unless he was compensated for his loss of income from cotton due to the diversion of acreage.
2. Landlords might not give tenants and croppers time to work the garden and tend to the stock when they needed it. They wouldn't rent to croppers unless they spent all of their time working cotton. They wouldn't take garden products for rent.
3. Landlords don't want Negroes to have their own gardens and livestock. They want to continue to make money on furnishing croppers.
4. Landlords would oppose it because it would cost them money to furnish tenants with land for pasture and a garden and equipment and livestock to enable them to participate in this program.
5. Such a program would not work unless the Government supervised it to see that landlords allowed tenants to participate and to carry out live-at-home practices.





- B. Opposition by landlords because of expected effects of these changes on the tenant situation.

Large land owners generally opposed these changes because of the following reasons:

1. Negro tenants would not garden and could not be made to.
2. This program would cause difficulties in supervising and furnishing tenants.
3. It takes the full time of labor to work a cotton crop.

- C. Reservations dealing with the problem of obtaining sufficient cash income and capital under such a live-at-home program.

1. Farmer must be compensated for the loss of cash income due to diversion of cotton acreage. Farmer can't get along on less cash.
2. The Government should provide the capital expenditures for fencing, livestock, equipment, etc.--needed to get started.
3. The farmer must be allowed to sell crops from the diverted acres so as to keep up his cash income.

- D. Reservations by farmers in areas already having some diversification who would not expect to benefit much from such a program.

In certain sections of the cotton belt farmers already raise a substantial portion of their living at home or as much of it as they can. Also, certain areas have developed some cash income from crops other than cotton. Many farmers in these areas opposed the changes or were lukewarm toward them for the following reasons:

1. Farmer feels that he already raises all of the living at home that he needs or that he can raise.
2. These changes would foster a shift to enterprises other than cotton and would increase the competition of those who are already engaging in them now.





E. Miscellaneous comments indicating reservations about administration.

1. Wants to make sure he continues to get benefit payments--afraid any change might result in loss of payments.
2. Such a program would be difficult to administer--might not be practical.
3. Restrictions and regulations must not be so strict that farmers cannot comply.
4. Such a program would be too costly to the Government.

V. Farmers' reactions to possible displacement under such live-at-home changes.

Farmers answered the question: "Would landlords allow their tenants to stay on under this kind of program?" as follows:

Yes	33%
It would depend on the inducements to the landlord	29
No	23
Don't know	15
	<u>100%</u>
No. of farmers answering	187

